

Jefferson National Expansion Memorial
11 North Fourth Street
St. Louis, MO 63102-1882

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior



National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior



Jefferson National Expansion Memorial
Old Courthouse



Victorian Christmas & St. Louis Holiday Traditions

November 26-December 31, 2004



Christmas in St. Louis A Historical Reflection

“Christmas Gift! Christmas Gift!” On Christmas morning the words of excited children rang through the French-colonial homes of St. Louis. The holiday season in early St. Louis was comprised of a series of celebrations. Observances began on Christmas Eve with midnight mass and ended with a community-wide celebration of the King’s Ball on the 6th of January.

Holiday traditions in St. Louis evolved in the 1800s as European immigrants continued to arrive in the community. The Victorian era was a time of extravagant celebration: music, masquerades, taffy pulls, sleighing parties and more. However, the most enduring custom of this era was the popularizing of the Christmas tree. Other customs that arose from this time were the tradition of sending greeting cards and our present-day concept of Santa Claus. This was a very busy time for the people of the Victorian years as holiday preparations began weeks in advance.

By the beginning of the 20th century, Christmas in St. Louis, as in America, underwent change. Electric lights, professional tree cutters and the toy industry were a result of increased commercialization and technological advances. America has continued to be a haven of many cultures, a refuge from political and religious persecution—a place where new celebrations may be created. It is just a matter of time before we see what new 21st-century American holiday celebrations will emerge.



Discovery Saturday Series Art and the Expedition December 11, 2004 — 12 noon to 4 pm

The December Discovery Saturday Series will highlight artistic impressions of the time period of the Lewis and Clark Expedition.

- 12 Noon** Children’s Choir Les Petits Chanteurs will perform traditional French Music
- 1 pm** Artist Gary Lucy will discuss visual elements of his artwork currently on display at the Old Courthouse
- 2 pm** Park Ranger Tony Gilpin, an accomplished artist, will coach participants in the production of an oil portrait
- 3 pm** Reenactors will present a view of life in St. Louis during the time of Lewis and Clark’s visit

Inland Waterways: The Highways of our Heritage December 19, 2004

A Sunday Afternoon Program Series presented in conjunction with the artwork of Gary Lucy on display in the Old Courthouse through January 9, 2005.

Modern Rivers

Meet some of today’s stewards who are preserving our rivers.

- 1 pm** Missouri River Relief
- 2 pm** Confluence
Greenway
- 3 pm** A History of the
St. Louis Harbor



Tree Lighting Ceremony at the Old Courthouse Friday, November 26, 2004

Join us at noon for a traditional tree lighting ceremony of our 25-foot Christmas tree followed by an afternoon of live holiday music in the rotunda. Light refreshments will be provided.

12 & 1 pm Compton Heights
Concert Band

2:00 pm The Caroling Party

3:00 pm St. Louis Gateway
Singers

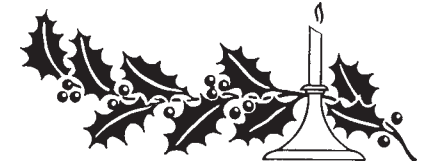


Be Part of a Reenactment of an 1864 St. Louis Benefit Ball



To prepare for the ball, this day's festivities begin with a 19th century dance step workshop from 11 am to 1 pm. The ball begins at 3 pm and ends at 7 pm. The 33rd Illinois Volunteer Regiment Band will provide live music. Light refreshments will also be provided.

All events are free and open to the public.



O Christmas Tree, O Christmas Tree

For many it would not seem like Christmas without a tree. The 25-foot Christmas tree which graces the rotunda of the Old Courthouse is laden with over 1,400 traditional Victorian-style ornaments and 300 electric candle lights.

The first recorded appearance of a Christmas tree in America occurred in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, in 1747.

Germans settling in this country brought the tradition of the Christmas tree with them.

With the union of Queen Victoria and Prince Albert, a German, the tree made its debut in their English castle in 1840. An engraving of the royal family celebrating



around the tree was reprinted in American magazines, thus widening the appeal of this German custom in America.

Early Victorian Christmas trees were significantly smaller than what we often see today. The engraving of the royal family showed a small tree displayed on a table. As the custom evolved in America, the trees became much taller and were adorned with handmade ornaments, popcorn chains, cornucopias, and miniature toys, and were topped with tin stars, wax-beaded angels, or glass-blown spikes.

Toward the end of the Victorian era a different tree evolved as a result of increased commercialization and modern technology. Handmade ornaments became fewer as commercially-produced ornaments were purchased and candles were replaced with electric lights. Such changes moved the tree into a new era, but still it remains an enduring tradition.



Come and Help us Celebrate the Holiday Season at the Old Courthouse

by Attending Any of a Number of Festive, Entertaining and Enriching Events

November 26 to December 22, 2004



Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<p>The Old Courthouse is open daily from 8:00 am to 4:30 pm, but closed Thanksgiving, Christmas Day, and New Years Day.</p> <p>For information and reservations concerning concerts and events Call (314) 655-1700, Monday - Friday 8 am to 4 pm. In case of inclement weather on the day of the concert, Call (314) 655-1600. Special holiday exhibits will be displayed at the Old Courthouse from November 26 through December 31, 2004. SCHEDULE SUBJECT TO CHANGE WITHOUT NOTICE</p>				25 Thanksgiving Day Closed	26 12 Noon & 1 pm Compton Heights Band 2 pm The Caroling Party 3 pm St. Louis Gateway Singers	27 12 Noon Rising Generations Youth Chorus
28	29 12 Noon St. Charles West High School Choir	30	1 12 Noon St. Louis Metropolitan Brass Quintet	2	3 12 Noon DuBray Middle School Orchestra	4 11 am - 1 pm Dance Step Workshop 3 pm - 7 pm 1864 Ball Reenactment 33rd Illinois Volunteer Regiment
5	6 12 Noon Stars of David	7	8 12 Noon The Belltones (SW Bell Chorus)	9	10 12 Noon Sumner High School Choir	11 12 Noon Les Petits Chanteurs 1pm - 4 pm Discovery Saturday
12	13 12 Noon Silk Pajamas (Jazz Music)	14	15 12 Noon Sounds of 100	16	17 12 Noon Mehlville High School Madrigal Singers	18 12 Noon River City Pops 1 pm Hazelwood All District Honors Orchestra
19 1 pm-4 pm Inland Waterways Series	20 12 Noon Flutes Alive!	21	22 12 Noon Elizabeth Gerberding (harpist)	23	24	25 Christmas Day Closed